

STATEMENT OF
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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG POLICY
AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CONCERNING

“ICE IN THE OZARKS: THE METHAMPHETAMINE EPIDEMIC IN ARKANSAS”

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BENTONVILLE, ARKANSAS

Chairman Souder and Members of the Subcommittee:

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. As Acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, I have seen, first-hand, the devastating effects of the methamphetamine problem in this area. With my testimony today, I hope to provide you with useful information about the methamphetamine problem in general and also tell you about a particular case that arose in this district that is, in my opinion, symbolic of both the challenges we face and the success we have enjoyed.

The distribution and use of methamphetamine in the Western District of Arkansas have increased by a large extent in the last few years. I believe that every level of law enforcement, whether it be local, county, state, or federal, will tell you that methamphetamine is their number one drug problem. The number of methamphetamine cases prosecuted in the Western District of Arkansas alone has increased four-fold in the last few years.

Methamphetamine, or “meth” as it commonly known, is both produced locally by people

called “cooks” and is also shipped here from other states, primarily Texas and California. Meth is a highly addictive and overwhelmingly dangerous drug. Meth can be smoked, snorted, injected or taken orally. It typically appears as a white, bitter tasting powder. Experts have observed that users often get hooked after just one use. Recent studies have shown that meth causes more damage to the brain than alcohol, cocaine, or even heroin. Meth, which also goes by

the street names “speed,” “chalk,” “crank,” “crystal,” and “ice,” is a toxic addictive stimulant that

produces hyperactivity, euphoria, and a sense of increased energy. It also increases the heart rate,

and raises blood pressure, body temperature, and the rate of breathing. Frequently, it also causes violent behavior in users. High doses or chronic use have been associated with nervousness, irritability, and paranoia. Chronic abuse can cause psychosis similar to schizophrenia and can cause auditory and visual hallucinations. Withdrawal from habitual use can cause severe depression. The “crystal” or “ice” form of meth is especially dangerous and addictive form of the drug. Named for its appearance, which is similar to chunky crystals resembling rock candy, ice is smoked in a manner similar to crack cocaine.

In addition to the dangers associated with meth use, the manufacture or “cooking” of the drug also presents a deadly hazard. Meth is often cooked in clandestine “labs” located in homes or motel rooms which contain not only the toxic and highly combustible ingredients used in cooking the drugs, but also children in many instances. Tragically, many meth labs are discovered only after an explosion and fire has destroyed the operation, often with a human toll.

Throughout the southern United States, including the Western District of Arkansas, the

investigation and prosecution of meth cases consume extraordinary amounts of law enforcement resources. Although the problem seems, at times, to be insurmountable, in this district we have enjoyed some success. I want to share one such example with you today.

Operation Treasure Hunt is an example of how vast quantities of the drug are regularly transported from California to Arkansas.

In May 2001, officer Adam Hulsizer of the Decatur Police Department made a traffic stop and found an individual in possession of drug paraphernalia. The individual agreed to cooperate in order to receive assistance on his charges and told Officer Hulsizer that he knew Charles Hudson of Decatur, Arkansas, was involved in receiving and distributing large quantities of methamphetamine. Officer Hulsizer contacted officers with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) from Fayetteville, Arkansas, who arranged to meet with the cooperator.

As a result of this cooperation, another individual, who was a distributor of methamphetamine for Charles Hudson, was arrested with 3/4 pounds of methamphetamine and \$4275 in cash. This individual also agreed to cooperate with law enforcement. As a result of this second individual's cooperation, and with the help of the Benton County Prosecutor's Office, officers eventually obtained a state search warrant for the residence of Charles Hudson in Decatur, Arkansas.

On April 5, 2002, law enforcement officers executed the search warrant on Hudson's residence and seized 3.3 pounds of ice, 10 pounds of powder meth, 27 firearms, including a machine gun, and approximately \$18,000 in cash and other assets. As the investigation continued, officers subsequently learned that one James Moore was involved in distributing

methamphetamine for Hudson. On April 11, 2002, officers conducted a consent search of Moore's residence and seized approximately one pound of methamphetamine and a firearm.

Through further investigation, law enforcement officers determined that for approximately two years Sergio Arroyo of Delhi, California, had been supplying large quantities of methamphetamine to Hudson in exchange for money and firearms. DEA officers in Arkansas obtained assistance from the DEA in California and from the California Highway Patrol to conduct an investigation of Arroyo. Officers discovered that Arroyo had previously been arrested for delivering methamphetamine in California and was believed by the California authorities to be involved with a large drug trafficking organization in California. As a result of a coordinated investigation with authorities in California, Arroyo was arrested for conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. It was estimated by investigators that Arroyo had supplied Hudson with more than 100 pounds of methamphetamine, which was worth in excess of \$1,000,000. Officers learned that Arroyo used individuals who are called "mules" to drive the drugs from California to Arkansas and then return to California with cash and guns from Hudson.

Due in large part to the cooperation between all levels of law enforcement, each of the defendants in this case pled guilty to various charges. Arroyo was sentenced to serve 210 months in prison, 5 years supervised release, and a \$12,500 fine on a charge of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. Hudson was sentenced to serve 135 months in prison, 5 years supervised release, and a \$17,500 fine on charges of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and possession of a machine gun. Moore was sentenced to serve 87 months in prison, 3 years supervised release, and a \$5000 fine on charges of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

The officers primarily involved in the investigation of this organization were DEA Task Force Officers, Rick Lane of the Siloam Springs Police Department, and David Jones of the Rogers Police Department. The agencies involved in the investigation and prosecution of this organization included the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Decatur Police Department, the Rogers Police Department, the Siloam Springs Police Department, the Springdale Police Department, the Fayetteville Police Department, the 4th Judicial District Drug Task Force, the Benton County Sheriff's Office, the Washington County Sheriff's Office, the California Bureau of Narcotics, and the Benton County Prosecutor's Office.

This case is a good example of how the combined efforts of local, state, and federal agencies can be effective in stemming the flow of deadly drugs across state lines. This case had a direct and measurable impact on the availability of crystal and powder methamphetamine on the streets of Benton County, Arkansas. The drug quantities being sold by this network were as large for a group of this size as any prosecuted by my office at that time. However, this case does not stake a claim for victory in this important struggle. As recently as this spring, another methamphetamine trafficking ring was taken down by a combined effort that enlisted a Title III wiretap as a part of the investigation. This case was another instance of methamphetamine being shipped in large quantities from California to the Western District of Arkansas.

At the current time, twelve individuals are in custody and are facing federal prosecution.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss this important topic. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

